**DOCUMENT RESUME**

ED 377 736 FL 022 725

AUTHOR Nakajima, Setsuko
TITLE Teaching Japanese for Busy People.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions (13th, Ypsilanti, MI, April 13-16, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; Comparative Analysis; Contrastive Linguistics; *Conversational Language Courses; Course Descriptions; Curriculum Design; *Daily Living Skills; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Intercultural Communication; *Japanese; Phonology; Postsecondary Education; Professional Development; Second Language Instruction; *Second Languages; Sentence Structure
IDENTIFIERS Japan

ABSTRACT

A course designed to teach survival Japanese language and culture to businessmen and professionals with little time for language study is described. The goals were to teach survival vocabulary and a few basic sentence structures and to develop the learners' pragmatic competence in using them. Portions of a commercial textbook were used for instruction. The class met in 4-hour sessions for 11 consecutive days, with just over half the instruction in English and the remainder in Japanese. Basic principles used in conducting the course included: use of short sentences; teaching phonetic differences between English and Japanese; instruction in the effective use of two expressions: "Onegaishimasu and Sumimasen"; use of contextualized exercises; and incorporation of detailed explanations on usage of expressions. Those who wish to continue Japanese language study are able to join the regular first-year course in the second term, with some additional study of the Japanese phonetic alphabet. (MSE)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 377 736

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Geoffrey Wright

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Setsuko Nakajima, Senior Instructor

Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures

Kidder Hall 210

Oregon State University

Corvallis, OR 97331

Tel. 503-737-3951

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

# Teaching Japanese for Busy People

This course is designed to teach survival Japanese language and culture to businessmen and professionals who are too busy to take regular Japanese courses but are desperate to learn Japanese in order to get around in Japan alone. Some CEOs may claim that they have no difficulties in Japan even though they do not know any Japanese. They are escorted by Japanese whenever they need to go out. If they can speak even a few sentences in Japanese during social drinking occasions, however, they can "break the ice" easily. Japanese businessmen recognize and appreciate their effort to understand Japanese language and culture.

FL023725

For these American businessmen and professionals sparing time to attend class regularly is the biggest problem. No matter how earnestly they try to learn Japanese, they have to occasionally skip classes because of meetings and business trips. As a result, they drop out from the class and either



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

give up Japanese or take private lessons. In fact I ended up spending more time giving individual students help than the usual class time when I taught a group of employees of a computer company.

Under these circumstances I reached two conclusions:
1. I should set a short term goal teaching them survival Japanese and a few basic sentence structures so that they can apply their knowledge rather than simply memorize expressions.
2. I should develop their pragmatic competence. Because they can learn only a limited number of sentence structures, I should demonstrate how to use the sentence structures in various situations and train them so that they can actually utilize them.

I. Text

The textbook used for this course was Japanese: the Spoken Language, Part I by L. Jorden. Lessons 1A through 3B as well as parts of Lessons 4,5 and 6 were covered. I found this textbook most suitable for this course because the students could learn some basic sentence structures, and at the same time they also could develop pragmatic competence in a short time.

## II. Class Format

The class met eleven days consecutively. Each day consisted of four one-hour sessions. One hour was used for grammar explanation conducted in English. Two to three hours were devoted to drill, one and a half hours of which were conducted only in Japanese. This Japanese-only drill was practiced from the first day of the course. The rest - a half hour to one hour - was devoted to practical culture such as Japanese customs.

## III. Guidelines on how to conduct the course.

### 1. Use short sentences

One of the preeminent features of the Japanese language is that items obvious to both conversants are not stated. The subject and its direct and indirect objects are often omitted. With only predicate, a Japanese speaker can state a completely understood sentence. Therefore, a speaker does not have to utter a long sentence. For example, while holding a pen, an English speaker might say, "Will you use this pen?" A Japanese person would say "Will use?" omitting "you" and "this pen." Thus, "tukaimasuka" is "Do/Will he/she/we/you/they use it?" When a speaker and the interlocutor share the same context, the interlocutor

understands what the speaker means without fail. Therefore the speakers do not have to say "Anata wa kono pen o tukaimasuka." They simply hold a pen and say,"tukaimasuka." When one asks if a third person, Mr. Smith, wants to use the pen, the speaker adds Sumisu-san in front of "tukaimasu." During the mechanical drill sessions, I use visual aids in order to set a context.

An American businesswoman claims in Americans' View on Japanese that being perceptive is an important asset in order to do business successfully with Japanese.[1] The side effect of this drill method is that the students are trained to be perceptive because they always have to guess the unstated part of sentences and to judge a Japanese statement from context.

2. Teach the difference in phonetics between English and Japanese.

Sizable Japanized English words from food to high tech terminology are used in Japanese daily life, and their examples are too numerous to mention. If speakers know how to pronounce English words in the Japanese way, it helps them tremendously. They can try English words first. If it does not work, then they can take another step such as drawing a picture or even writing the English word --- many Japanese can read simple English words but cannot speak them.

The primary difference in pronunciation is that English is syllabic and Japanese is mola. Every consonant in Japanese is followed by a vowel except for the "n" sound, and consonant clusters do not occur. For example, "street" becomes "sutoriito" when a Japanese says it. I add three other differences. Japanese has only five vowels: A I U E O. the "R" sound is close to the "L" of English. The English "th" sounds like either "s" or "z" in Japanese. Therefore "think tank" sounds like "sink tank." After introducing these differences, I make the students say some English words in the Japanese way: "Tell me 'ice cream' in Japanese, and say it slowly and without syllabic accent."

3. Use two golden expressions effectively:
   Onegaishimasu & Sumimasen.

"Onegaishimasu" literally means that I humbly make a request of you. It has several different English equivalents such as "Would you please do it?," "Please take care of things," "Please do," "May I have it?," "I'd like to have it," etc. Due to this variety of English equivalents, people can make themselves understood to Japanese in many situations by using "Onegaishimasu."
"Coffee onegaishimasu" is "I would like to have a cup of coffee." "Copy onegaishimasu" is "Please make photocopies." If they would like to check in their luggage, they say, "Kore

onegaishimasu."---Please take care of the luggage. When they catch a taxi and want to tell the driver to go to the Ginza, they say, "Ginza onegaishimasu."

"Sumimasen" is also often used. Although its English equivalents are "Pardon me," "Excuse me," and "Thank you," it has various functions. A customer can get a salesclerk's attention by saying "sumimasen." One can also approach strangers without scaring them. As Akira Hoshino points out in Invitation to Cross Culture, Japanese also use "sumimasen" to help smooth the progress of conversation or negotiation.[2] Kenichiro Omae blames this usage of "Sumimasen" as one of the causes of conflicts between Japan and the U.S. [3] Japanese use "sumimasen" often because they try to calm down an angry person before they ponder the facts associated with a problem and the way of logical argument. Japanese try to deal with problems but do not solve them. Omae calls the Japanese diplomacy "Diplomacy of Apology" and urges the government to change the strategy. Despite Omae's claim, it would still be better for customers to add "sumimasen" whenever they request something special: "Sumimasen, hayaku onegaishimasu" --- Please do it faster.

4. Contextualized exercise is important.

Situational drills are an essential part of this course. By carefully setting situations, an instructor tests the

students on how promptly and properly they can react using learned expressions. Instructors cannot train students pragmatic competence simply by introducing sentence structures and expressions and giving mechanical drills

Last summer I extended this drill and made my students ask directions of some Japanese tourists who had just arrived from Japan and could not speak English. I asked the Japanese to react to my students questions as they usually would in Japan. I took my students outside and gave each of them an assignment: "you are going to the Yamada building and ask where it is." I gave the Japanese a map which showed the buildings around us. The buildings had two names: one was the original English name, and the other was a Japanese name which the students were given in the assignments. After each assignment was performed, I asked the student for the English equivalent of the Japanese named building. For example, the Yamada building was the Library. Three out of five students passed this test.

One vital point for instructors is that they should not create unnatural and unrealistic drills. In order to practice the negative form of verbal sentences, example number one is not appropriate while number two is acceptable.

1. A: Coffee nomimasenka B: Nomimasen.
   (Won't you have coffee?) (No, I won't have it.)
2. A: Coffee nomimasenka B: Ie, chotto kekkodesu.

(No, thank you.)

Here A is inviting B to have coffee, and B's response in number one is fairly offensive. When A asks B if C drinks coffee or not, it is an acceptable answer.

5. Use detailed explanations on the usage of expressions

Akira Hoshino stresses that knowing how to use expressions is essential to learning a language and that merely learning the meanings of expressions is not enough.[4] For example, "Verbal-tai-form" is the Japanese equivalent of "want to do ..." However its usage is quite different from that of American English. "Nani ga nomitaidesuka" --- What do you want to drink?--- is offensive when it is used by a host in order to ask a dinner guest's preference of drinks. Even a waiter or a waitress do not use this expression when they take an order. As Takeo Doi explains in The Anatomy of Dependance, Japanese do not express their desires clearly when they affect someone else.[5] If the speaker determines that his or her desire does not affect anyone else, he or she uses this expression. Persons new to a town may ask their colleagues where to go in order to buy furniture: "I want to buy a chair. Where should I go?" By the same token, non-native Japanese speakers have to be careful when using the "Do you want..." sentence structure. "Coffee nomitaidesuka." is equivalent with "Do you want to have coffee." in

English. It may, however, have the interlocutors wonder what they did to made the speaker ask the question.

VI. Implementation

Those students who want to continue studying Japanese can join the regular First Year course beginning winter term. However, they need to study hiragana, the Japanese phonetic alphabet. I prepare a hiragana study guide and practice sheet in addition to a course packet. One of the students who took this course last summer was enrolled in the regular class beginning winter 1993 and has been doing very well in class.

IV. Conclusion

Japanese is considered to be a difficult language for Westerners to learn. It is categorized at level four where the most challenging language is level five. However, I respond that Japanese is different but not difficult whenever people ask me about the hardships of learning Japanese. What students need is a flexible mind so that they can accept the differences.

The students enrolled in this experimental class last year have limited abilities. Yet, acquiring a modicum of Japanese and being able to use it is far better than knowing

nothing. Akira Hoshino says that language competence is one of the necessary conditions in order to be adopted into a different culture.[6] I sometimes hear from my acquaintances that Japanese starts to be more friendly once they start uttering some Japanese. Japanese appreciate their efforts to learn Japanese.

Notes

1. Miyamoto, Michiko and Nagasawa, Makoto Americans' View on Japanese (Tokyo: Shisoo-sha, 1982) P. 104

2. Hoshino, Akira Invitation to Cross Culture (Tokyo: Yomiurishinbun-sha, 1992 ) P. 137

3. Omae, Kenichiro Japanese Firms' Survival Strategy (Tokyo: Shincho-sha, 1990) P.171

4. Hoshino, Akira Invitation to Cross Culture (Tokyo: Yomiurishinbun-sha, 1992) P. 19

5. Doi, Takeo Anatomy of Dependance (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1971) P. 3

6. Hoshino, Akira Invitation to Cross Culture (Tokyo: Yomiurishinbun-sha, 1992) P. 16

**Teaching Japanese for Busy People**

**I. Textbook:** Japanese: the Spoken Language part I

**II. Class format:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9:30 - 10:20 | Lecture: | grammar explanation conducted in English |
| 10:30 - 11:20 | Drill: | listening audio-tapes at Language Lab |
| 11:30 - 12:20 | Drill: | situational drills in class conducted in Japanese |
| 12:30 - 13:20 | Culture | |

**III. Chart**